

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Basic background
- Commercial diplomacy
- Analysis of PM visit 2015
- Case studies
- Indian security interest in Tajikistan—Agni airbase and Farkhor

BASIC BACKGROUND

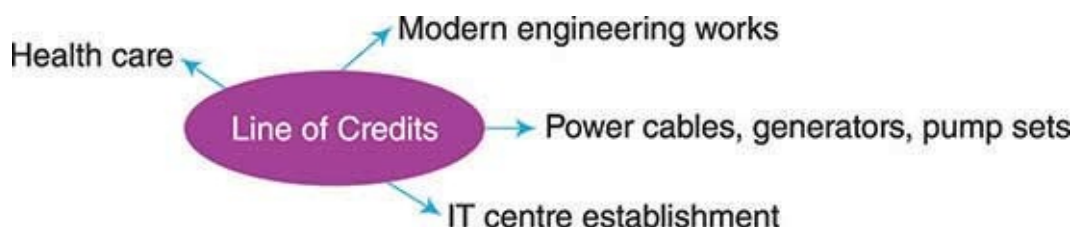
Tajik is a small Central Asian republic and borders Afghanistan. The strategic importance of the nation is due to its proximity to Afghanistan. India established diplomatic relations with the country in 1994. It is a nation rich in hydroelectric power potential (HEP). During the time of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the strategic significance of Tajik territory for India increased and India played a crucial role in Tajik to support of the Northern Alliance. India established a military hospital in Farkhor and used the airbase at Agni for assistance. As the US withdrew from Afghanistan, the significance of Tajikistan will increase again in future.

COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY

The institutional architecture for commercial diplomacy with Tajik is as follows:



India exports pharmacy products, iron and meat products while it imports aluminium, cotton and essential oils. The trade between the two is mostly suitcase trade. This means that individual retailers from Tajikistan come to India and purchase woollens, leather products and pharma products and go back to do direct retail in Tajikistan. India has been providing lines of credit to Tajikistan for multiple products.

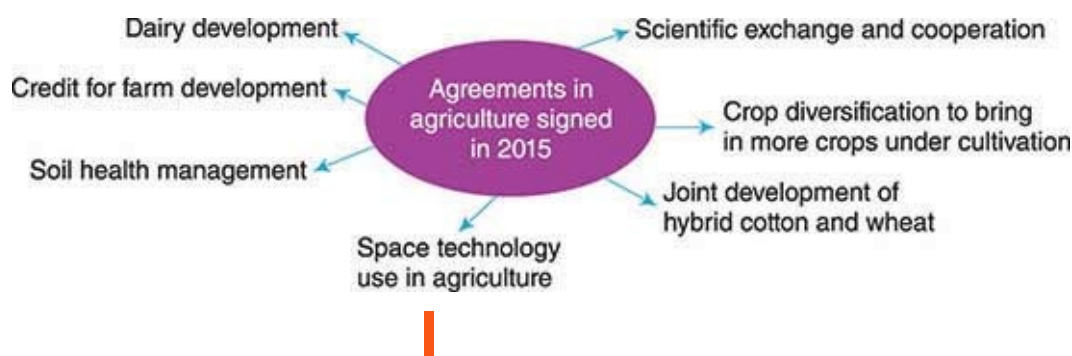


The lines of credit by India has been used by Tajiks for establishment of an IT Centre in Bedil with assistance from C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing, India). The monetary assistance is also used for oral polio vaccines and purchase of ambulances.

As Tajikistan is a country rich in hydroelectricity, India's BHEL and National Hydel Power Corporation have been working on HEP plants in Varzob-1 and Sangtuda-1, with some firms, namely Marwis Private Limited and Valpro Group, exploring the oil and gas sector in Shcurab and Fan Yagnob. Tanya constructions have also bagged projects for repairing of air strips of Khujand and Dushanbe.

ANALYSIS OF INDIAN PRIME MINISTER VISIT—2015

In 2015, the Indian PM visited Tajikistan and gifted Emomali Rahman a miniature painting of the tomb of the 17th century Indian poet Abdul Qadir Bedil. For the first time ever, Tajikistan organised a joint event on agriculture to showcase the needs of Tajikistan and forge international partnerships. The Indian PM also participated in the event. The PM also unveiled a statue of Tagore and concluded agreements to cooperate on multiple issues with special focus on agriculture. An agreement to establish computer laboratories was concluded and promotion of cultural cooperation was envisaged.



Indian Security Interests in Tajikistan (Ayni and Farkhor)

In Tajikistan, there is an airbase at Ayni that had been developed by the Tajiks and Soviets. The Soviets used the airbase during the Cold War, but since 1989, it had been left without use. After the hijacking of the IC-814 Indian aircraft, the Indian Government instructed the R&AW to find a suitable airbase near Afghanistan for any eventualities. The R&AW, after its basic study, zeroed down upon Ayni airbase. Tajikistan and Afghanistan share a 1400 km long boundary. In 2002, after a bilateral defence cooperation pact was signed between India and Tajikistan, India began certain developments at the Ayni airbase.



India later on planned to deploy Mi-17 Choppers and Kiran training aircrafts.

The aim was to deploy these aircrafts to train Tajik air force pilots. However, due to certain reasons, in 2007, the Tajik Foreign Minister Harahon Zaripov officially declared that there is no Indo–Tajik cooperation at Ayni. One of the most likely reasons is the intervention of Russia so as to not allow India to have access to the airbase, despite India’s having pumped millions of dollars into reconstruction and refurbishment of Ayni. India, during the Taliban rule in Afghanistan (1996–2001), had also established a military hospital in Farkhor. The R&AW had been instrumental in the setting up of the military hospital and succeeded in even stationing some helicopters at the airstrip near Farkhor. As the US launched operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, the hospital was shut down and India opened a new hospital in South Tajikistan in the city of Qurghonteppa.